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REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND ON THE WORK OF ITS ANNUAL SESSION OF 1997

(2-6 June 1997)*

* The present document is a mimeographed version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its annual session (2-6 June 1997). The reports of the first regular session (20-24 January 1997) and the second regular session (18-19 March 1997) are issued as parts I and II, respectively. Those reports, as well as the report on the third regular session (9-12 September 1997), will be combined and issued in final form as Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 12 (E/1997/32/Rev.1-E/ICEF/1997/12/Rev.1).

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director

1. In her opening remarks, the President stressed that Board actions should lead to the strengthening of UNICEF in its efforts to respond to the needs of people. UNICEF was recognized in many parts of the world as the only hope not only for survival, but also for the development of human potential. UNICEF was working with the children of today who would form the families of tomorrow, and its mission should be to make thought and action truly cooperative.

2. She spoke about several important issues before the Board, including the allocation of general resources, which had been the subject of considerable discussion prior to the session. She also mentioned the recent meetings of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education (JCE) and of the UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP). She stressed the importance of looking beyond preventive actions to making investments in people in order to provide them with the tools to make their own decisions and to make actions sustainable.

3. In welcoming delegations to the session, the Executive Director dispensed with the usual format of her opening remarks to focus on "a single issue that is of overarching importance for all aspects of UNICEF work" - United Nations reform. She spoke about the strong support of UNICEF for, as well as her personal commitment to, the current reform process. The most obvious evidence of the organization's commitment to the goals of reform was the Management Excellence Programme (MEP), which was helping UNICEF to create a new internal management culture that reflected enhanced standards of performance and accountability. This, she continued, had made it possible for UNICEF to coordinate its work more effectively with other parts of the United Nations system for greater coherence in planning, programming and implementation. In this process, the secretariat was guided by the belief that its strongest support should go to reforms that enhance the capacity of UNICEF to promote the protection of children's rights and to work for the survival and full development of children.

4. Until now, UNICEF had participated in the reform groups focusing on the Track One proposals which aim at reducing administrative costs, streamlining Secretariat functions and, of greatest relevance to UNICEF, better integrating United Nations activities at the country level. The Executive Director detailed the position of UNICEF with regard to those proposals, noting that Track One was proceeding at a good pace, with all outstanding matters well on the way to resolution.

5. She said that the Secretary-General would announce the Track Two initiatives around mid-July and that UNICEF would help to advance these more far-reaching reforms. Although the details of the proposals were still being developed, she shared her views on the nature of these broader reform proposals. The two key areas of reform currently under discussion with direct relevance to UNICEF were development operations and humanitarian affairs.

6. On the issue of development operations, she mentioned several areas of concern to UNICEF, in particular what happens in the field and the suggestion to consolidate several existing Executive Boards into a single Board. In order to carry out its mandate, UNICEF must be able to continue its country programmes,

which means working in partnership with Governments and civil society, with collaborative input from the United Nations system. UNICEF representatives who are answerable to the Executive Director must remain responsible for the development and implementation of country programmes. She acknowledged the good working relationship between the UNICEF secretariat and its Executive Board as it is presently constituted and hoped that the same degree of specialized knowledge, support and non-political dialogue would be maintained in any future structure. Within any collaborative and coordinated framework, it was vital that UNICEF retain its capacity and authority to speak directly for children everywhere, to develop and implement discrete country programmes under Board guidance and to carry out its own fund-raising.

7. With regard to humanitarian affairs, she spoke about the option of creating a new humanitarian affairs agency into which the agencies handling emergencies would be consolidated. This would include UNICEF, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, possibly, the World Food Programme (WFP). In this scenario, UNHCR would effectively become the United Nations humanitarian organization, with wider powers than it presently has. She said that UNICEF must ensure that all aspects of the care and protection of children remain high on the humanitarian agenda, and that UNICEF, with its special developmental perspective, continue to be recognized as the leading advocate of a "first call for children".

8. She raised the following issues for delegations to bear in mind when considering the Track Two reform proposals: what effect would they have on the nature and role of UNICEF; how would they work in detail; would they improve operations in the field; would they help to mobilize additional resources for basic social services; would they improve governance; and how would they serve the rights and needs of children.

9. In closing, she recalled 37 years ago when Henry Labouisse accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for UNICEF and told his audience in Oslo that the most important meaning of the Prize was "the solemn recognition that the welfare of today's children is inseparably linked with the peace of tomorrow's world". "The truth of that observation has not changed", she said, "nor has UNICEF's central and leading role as a strong and independent voice for children the world over". (See E/ICEF/1997/CRP.14 for the full text of her statement.)

10. The Executive Director's statement generated considerable interest among delegations, many of whom commented on the subject at various times throughout the session. They welcomed her candid and comprehensive presentation and affirmed the importance of United Nations reform. They also stressed the need for UNICEF to participate fully in the process. It was generally agreed that the approach taken by UNICEF was constructive and appropriate. In this connection, mention was made of the internal management excellence process currently being undertaken by UNICEF, which put it in a place to be a leader in United Nations reform. Some delegations said that the reform process should preserve the advantages and services of agencies so that they can better carry out their functions and stressed the importance of UNICEF maintaining its separate identity - within a strengthened United Nations framework - as the agency working for the survival, development and protection of children. The reform process, it was felt, should serve to enhance UNICEF capacity. Speakers expressed appreciation for UNICEF support for the Track One proposals, but said that the Track Two proposals would need to be addressed in a broader context at the appropriate time, perhaps at the third regular session in September.

B. Adoption of the agenda

11. The agenda of the session, as contained in document E/ICEF/1997/13 and Corr.1, was adopted. The agenda contained the following items:

Item 1: Opening of the session: statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director

Item 2: Adoption of the provisional agenda and timetable and organization of work

Item 3: Report of the Executive Director (Part II)

Item 4: Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Item 5: Implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures

Item 6: Ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa

Item 7: Oral report on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa

Item 8: Report on the allocation of general resources

Item 9: Outline of UNICEF information and publication policy

Item 10: Greeting Card and related Operations (GCO):

(a) GCO work plan and proposed budget for 1997

(b) GCO financial report and statements for the year ended 30 April 1996

Item 11: Reports on the meetings of the UNESCO/UNICEF JCE and the UNICEF/WHO JCHP (to be reconstituted as the WHO/UNICEF/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Coordinating Committee on Health)

Item 12: Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF

Item 13: Field visit of Executive Board members

Item 14: Other matters

Item 15: Closing of the session: remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board

12. In accordance with rule 50.2 and the annex of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 69 observer delegations had submitted credentials for the session.

13. In addition, 5 United Nations bodies, 2 specialized agencies, 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 4 National Committees for UNICEF and Palestine had submitted credentials.

II. DELIBERATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

A. Report of the Executive Director (Part II)

14. The Executive Director introduced her annual report (E/ICEF/1997/10 (Part II)), recalling that it had been shared with delegations prior to the present session to provide them with sufficient time for analysis and comments. She pointed out that in the preparation of the report, the secretariat had tried to be concise, to avoid repetition and to cross-reference with relevant documents.

15. Numerous speakers expressed appreciation for the report and for the continued commitment and work carried out by UNICEF in 1996. Several delegations commented positively on the improved format and content of the report, especially its more developed analytical approach, while others encouraged UNICEF to enhance even further the analytical aspect of the report. One delegation suggested that the report focus on the impact of UNICEF activities and on the constraints faced, while also looking at the future direction and long-term strategies of the organization. Two delegations expressed the wish to see clearer links between global trends and priority programmatic interventions aimed at meeting the needs of children and women and ensuring the realization of their rights. One speaker said that there was no mention of UNICEF work in the Pacific region.

16. Strong support was expressed for the focus on poverty reduction, especially in view of the trend of decreasing aid, and UNICEF was urged to collaborate closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on this process. Several delegations commented on the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes, globalization and liberalization on the economies of low-income countries and on the resultant difficulties experienced in trying to improve the situation of women and children. UNICEF was requested to better clarify its position in relation to the issue of the impact of structural adjustment. It was important that efficiency was not achieved at the expense of equity. The Executive Director said that UNICEF strongly supported economic reform with the hope is that it would ultimately lead to more equity. What was of great concern to UNICEF was not only increasing poverty, but also increasing disparities.

17. Stressing that the 20/20 Initiative should get high priority, one delegation reported on preparatory activities for a follow-up meeting on the Initiative as agreed at the 1996 Oslo Conference. The full involvement of UNICEF as well as of other United Nations agencies and the World Bank was strongly encouraged by a number of delegations. More information on the subject would be made available at the next Board session in September. The secretariat said that UNICEF had been actively supporting the Initiative and was fully involved in efforts for the follow-up meeting.

18. While expressing their appreciation for the accomplishments highlighted in the mid-term report on the achievement of the World Summit for Children goals, several delegations said that much remained to be done to ensure the survival, development and protection of children. UNICEF was encouraged to increase its focus on protection from abuse, exploitation, family separation and disabilities. Another delegation stressed the need to devote scarce available resources to the countries most in need.

19. Several delegations emphasized the need for a stronger focus on strengthening data and monitoring systems. In view of the need to increase countries' capabilities to collect reliable data, information was requested on

present and foreseen future needs and plans in the improvement of country databases to achieve comparability of data. One delegation stressed the importance of monitoring capacity-building efforts. The Executive Director said that UNICEF was committed to continue strengthening capacity-building at the institutional level and developing crucial data collection and analysis capability among appropriate national agencies charged with monitoring and collecting data on achievement of the goals. Several delegations requested additional information on the ways in which UNICEF was facilitating community participation and capacity-building for self-reliance and sustainability, and they looked forward to the report being prepared to document best practices and lessons learned in community participation and empowerment as mentioned in paragraph 69 of the document.

20. A number of delegations said that UNICEF should increase attention to the problems associated with growing urbanization and its impact on poverty and on the urban deprived child. One delegation said that the issue had not been addressed in the report in all its complexity, especially in relation to Africa and to its components of violence, prostitution, etc. Another delegation requested additional information on how UNICEF was developing its urban focus. One speaker said that development efforts should focus on rural areas from where people migrate in order to reduce urbanization. The Executive Director replied that UNICEF was not trying to do something different, but would review its programmatic interventions.

21. Several delegations expressed the view that coordination among agencies at all levels - particularly at field level - was essential to enhance operations, and the experience of Ghana was specifically mentioned. UNICEF was also encouraged to improve programme integration as well as the coordination of experts at country level. Another speaker stressed that coordination among Governments, bilaterals and multilaterals alike was necessary to enable national Governments to take the lead in planning and implementation. The importance of coordination in capacity-building and emergency operations were also mentioned. Several speakers requested additional information on the experience of UNICEF with the new country programme process and on coordination at country level as the report did not provide detailed information on these issues.

22. One delegation requested specific information on UNICEF strategies and programmes for combatting the problem of violence against children and women as this was not contained in the report.

23. Several delegations praised the organization's emphasis on the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the legal framework for its action to protect children, adding that the challenge now was to implement it through its programming. A clear strategy and programmatic guidelines that emphasized priority action to be taken in consultation with recipient countries were now required.

24. Several remarks were made about the distinction between a rights-based approach and a needs-based approach. One delegation said that the best way to act on children's rights was to meet their needs. While expressing support for the rights-based approach, two other speakers expressed concern that the rights-based approach could unintentionally be seen as opposed to the needs-based approach. Another speaker said that the two approaches were interlinked and requested that this reality be addressed in the future. With regard to the rights framework, the Deputy Director, Programme Division, said that the main responsibility in the implementation of the Convention rested with the countries that have ratified it and that UNICEF was only one of the players

actively involved in supporting its implementation. The framework provided by the Convention did not require a change in the way country programmes work. In fact, she said, the triple A approach of assessment, analysis and action was highly applicable to the rights approach.

25. A number of delegations welcomed UNICEF partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and encouraged UNICEF to increase its support to HIV/AIDS-related activities. It was observed that today AIDS represents the fastest growing cause of child deaths in Africa, negating achievements made in reducing child mortality and morbidity and presenting another challenging problem - the increasing number of orphans. One delegation stressed the importance of close coordination at country level between UNICEF and UNAIDS and requested information on the modalities of UNICEF support to UNAIDS. The Executive Director assured delegations that UNICEF would further strengthen its collaboration with UNAIDS and cited several examples of what UNICEF was doing presently, including working jointly with UNAIDS on a publication on youth and AIDS prevention.

26. All speakers addressing the issue of resource mobilization expressed great concern about the trends of increasing poverty and declining official development assistance and stressed the importance of maximizing the use of resources. Efforts needed to be made to mobilize resources from all sources using creative methods in order to be able to support implementation of agreed programmes. The UNICEF commitment to eliminate poverty had to include an attack on the root causes of poverty, which had to be taken into account in the allocation of resources. One delegation remarked about the impact of reduced funding on emergency interventions as well. As a result, it was imperative for UNICEF to focus on the countries most in need and on the children most at risk. Another delegation highlighted the need to give special attention to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States in view of the delicate process of transition they are experiencing. Several speakers requested information on what UNICEF was doing to mobilize new and additional resources, including from non-traditional donors, stating that this information was not included in the report. The Executive Director said that UNICEF was committed to making the best possible use of its resources and was actively looking for alternative sources. In the meantime, the possibility to roll over funds would ensure that they were not lost. There had been an increase in private funding and fund-raising activities were also taking place in countries in which there are UNICEF programmes.

27. One delegation commented on the initiative being undertaken by UNICEF to mobilize increased general resources by working with donors to identify contributions that could be allocated to general resources instead of supplementary funds when the special information and reporting needs of the donors could be met, as described in paragraph 116 of the document. The same speaker requested the secretariat to comment on the apparent trend of declining supplies and equipment and cash assistance and increasing programme support services as revealed in table 3 of the document. In response, the Executive Director explained that there had been a moderate increase in general resources. It was the secretariat's intention to report more accurately on the use of general resources and, therefore, encourage donors not to earmark their funds. She said that the apparent increase in programme support services was caused by the integration of the global funds (which no longer exist) into that category and that, in fact, there had not been an increase. She added that Board members would have a more accurate breakdown of expenditures in the next integrated budget presentation.

28. One delegation mentioned the increased contributions from NGOs and the private sector as a critical reason for UNICEF to stress its ties with NGOs. He also underlined the need to address how these contributions are utilized in the next report.

29. While a number of delegations praised the collaborative efforts between UNICEF and WHO in the area of immunization, several others expressed their concern about the unavailability and unaffordability of some of the new and improved vaccines for developing countries. One delegation specifically requested UNICEF to clarify how the agency was going to address the issue of equal access to vaccines. Another delegation pointed out the weaknesses of developing countries in the production of the new vaccines and requested assistance in creating a regional centre for vaccine production. The Executive Director said that UNICEF shared the concern expressed by some delegations on the issue of access to new and improved vaccines. UNICEF and WHO were trying to call attention to this issue and to develop strategies to support countries that were unable to afford the new vaccines.

30. Several delegations stressed the need to analyse the issue of nutrition and household food security more in depth and to increase interventions in view of the slow progress recorded. The importance of an intersectoral approach to UNICEF interventions in the area of nutrition was stressed. Another delegation requested information on follow-up to the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition, which was not contained in the report. In response, the Chief, Nutrition Section, reported on follow-up to the conference organized by WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, noting that the conference had endorsed all nutrition-related goals agreed at the World Summit for Children and the method of tackling nutrition problems that UNICEF had articulated in its nutrition policy adopted by the Board in 1990. That nutrition strategy, he added, had served well in the 25 countries that had been able to implement it.

31. One delegation expressed appreciation for the focus on maternal mortality, and stressed the special role that UNICEF regional offices could play in support of this effort. The same speaker pointed out the contradiction between national statistics and official statistics and expressed the need to eliminate this discrepancy. Another speaker requested clarification of the status of maternal mortality among the priority areas of UNICEF interventions. The Executive Director expressed the serious commitment of UNICEF to both nutrition and maternal mortality - two areas that show negative trends. With regard to the latter, she said that UNICEF was in the process of discussing with WHO the necessary steps to be taken to increase action on this issue. In addition, the two organizations were in the process of producing revised guidelines on maternal mortality reduction.

32. One delegation said that UNICEF action in the development and protection of children should be preventive in nature, with another speaker adding that UNICEF work with children in difficult circumstances should also focus on rehabilitation. The importance of a particular focus on mainstreaming action for children with disabilities and children in armed conflict was also raised. In response to a query about future UNICEF interventions in child labour and its collaborative work with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Executive Director said that UNICEF had signed a Memorandum of Understanding - stressing a coordinated approach - with ILO, and was looking forward to the Oslo Conference.

33. Appreciation was expressed for the key focus placed by UNICEF on education, and girls education in particular. Commenting on the educational value of audio-visual programmes such as "Meena", one delegation asked that the programme be made available to other regions. In addition to strengthening its efforts towards basic education, UNICEF was also urged to place a special emphasis on girl school drop-outs.

B. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

34. Delegations commented on several other programme areas. The importance of a continued focus on universal access to improved hygiene practices and sanitation was stressed by some speakers. In response to a comment about the impact of malaria on child mortality and morbidity in Africa, the Executive Director said that although malaria was not included as one of the World Summit goals, UNICEF was convinced of the need to be involved in malaria control efforts. She added that a report on this important issue was contemplated. Two delegations expressed their support for the organization's continuing efforts in mainstreaming a gender-sensitive approach to programming. Human rights abuses against women in one country were mentioned, and the secretariat was requested to clarify the role of UNICEF in combatting such abuses. One delegation requested more information on UNICEF efforts to alleviate the impact of sanctions on children.

35. The Executive Board had before it the progress report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children (E/ICEF/1997/14 and Corr.1 and Corr.2), which was introduced by the Director, Division of Evaluation, Policy and Planning.

36. Many delegations welcomed the document, stating that it was informative and concise. Most speakers were encouraged by progress in immunization coverage, in eradicating polio and dracunculiasis and in increasing recognition of children's rights. UNICEF was commended for its persistent efforts and hard work in contributing to the progress achieved. A few speakers stressed the importance of national capacity-building to sustain progress.

37. Concern was expressed by many delegations about the lack of significant progress in the areas of maternal mortality, child malnutrition, basic education, and water and sanitation. It was felt that increasing attention should be paid to those areas. A few speakers suggested that UNICEF should prioritize its programmes in the remaining years, and several other speakers encouraged UNICEF to develop strategies on which to base the preparation of practical programmes. Basic education, especially quality and gender balance, was a concern of several delegations, which stressed that it should be a priority. Two delegations emphasized the importance of the community approach and of the role of families in meeting the remaining challenges and said that UNICEF should mobilize to empower families, parents and care-givers. One delegation recommended that UNICEF should consider extending time-frame for some of the World Summit for Children goals beyond the year 2000.

38. Two delegations encouraged UNICEF to develop a vision and a future direction beyond the year 2000. Another delegation raised questions about how UNICEF would programme the transitions beyond the year 2000, how it would work with Governments to integrate national programmes of action (NPAs) for children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how it would link World Summit goals with children's rights. One speaker requested further clarification on the complementarity between the Convention and the World Summit goals. In response, the Director said that the World Summit goals were time-bound benchmarks and children's rights were time-less goals. NPAs could play an

important role in promoting children's rights when developed in the framework of the Convention as a comprehensive national strategy to promote and protect the rights of the child.

39. One speaker requested clarification on why no specific goals on child rights, such as child labour, were included in the report. Another speaker suggested that in the future, the progress report should include more specific references to areas related to the protection of children in situations of child labour, sexual exploitation and disability. Another delegation commented that the resolution did not fully reflect on the violation of children's rights and should be revised for that purpose. The Director replied that the report had focused mainly on the end-decade goals and not specifically on child protection issues. The complementarity of the World Summit and the Convention and the close relationship between the achievement of the goals and the realization of child rights would undoubtedly contribute to the consideration of all areas of relevance for the life of all children, including special protection measures for particularly vulnerable groups of children.

40. UNICEF was advised by several speakers to support the Committee on the Rights of the Child more strongly, including with a view to ensuring that Committee membership be enlarged given the wide ratification of the Convention and the increasing workload faced by the Committee. The Director said that UNICEF strongly supported the Committee in its monitoring and advocacy functions. She also recommended that Governments support the General Assembly resolution to enlarge the Committee's membership from 10 to 18.

41. A few delegations stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluation, and suggested that UNICEF should measure progress, sum up experience and evaluate lessons learned. The mid-decade review, it was felt, provided a good opportunity to reflect on lessons learned, and one speaker said that one of the lessons learned from the review was that time-bound goals were important factors in helping to shape programmes. Another delegation wanted to know how UNICEF prioritized its work and what lessons had been learned, especially in the areas of maternal mortality, basic education and child malnutrition. A few speakers said that UNICEF should support the preparation of the end-decade review in 2001. Two speakers stressed the importance of developing child rights indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Several other speakers said that the effectiveness and efficiency of the multiple indicator cluster survey (MICS) methodology should be reviewed for its possible use in monitoring the end-decade goals. The Director replied that the secretariat was aware of the need for systematic data collection on children. Some indicators had been developed and steps were being taken to identify child rights indicators. UNICEF fully supported Governments' efforts in developing additional local indicators to adjust to specific national realities. She also informed delegations that an evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the MICS methodology was currently under way.

42. A few delegations emphasized the importance of partnerships, adding that the World Summit goals would not be achieved until and unless UNICEF worked closely with other partners. One speaker expressed an interest in learning how other agencies were contributing to the World Summit goals. (See chapter III, decision 1997/20, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

C. Implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures

43. The report on "Children in need of special protection measures: report on steps for policy implementation" (E/ICEF/1997/16) was presented by the Deputy Director, Programme Division. It was prepared as a companion paper to the 1996 policy review of UNICEF policies and strategies on child protection (E/ICEF/1996/14) in response to Executive Board decision 1996/27 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1), and provides a programming framework for the incorporation of special protection concerns within country programmes.

44. A large number of delegations intervened on this agenda item. There was general support for the approach and implementation plan presented in the report. Several delegations welcomed the two-pronged strategy of prevention and targeted responses. The concept of technical support networks was also endorsed by a number of delegations. In this connection, delegations stressed the importance of collaboration with NGOs and called for a further strengthening of UNICEF ties with strategic NGO partner organizations. Collaboration with other relevant United Nations agencies was also highlighted by delegations. A general concern expressed during the debate was the importance of mainstreaming of protection concerns throughout UNICEF programmes of cooperation, along with a genuine concern related to the appropriate allocation of general resources to ensure programme responses that addressed the needs and rights of children in situations of exploitation, abuse or neglect.

45. The complexities surrounding special protection issues were touched upon by several delegations which called for further clarification and analysis with regard to definitions and the various contexts requiring special protection measures. A clearer understanding and information on the scope and type of concrete UNICEF interventions in these areas would be welcomed. Delegations called for very clear information on the roles of the various agencies and the comparative advantage of UNICEF in this regard.

46. With regard to specific child protection issues, several delegations highlighted the importance of UNICEF involvement in activities addressing childhood disability, sexual abuse and exploitation, child labour, the impact of armed conflict on children and juvenile justice. There was a general request for more information on UNICEF activities in these areas. To this end, a number of delegations requested that the secretariat present a progress report on policy implementation at the 1998 annual session of the Executive Board which would emphasize mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation, and relevant indicators, and report on concrete activities at the country level. (See chapter III, decision 1997/21, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

D. Ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa

47. The Executive Board had before it a progress report on "Ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa" (E/ICEF/1997/15), which was introduced by the Director, Programme Division.

48. Many delegations expressed continued support for the work being done by UNICEF in Africa and for the priority accorded to sub-Saharan Africa. Several speakers referred to the progress in Africa noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the mid-decade review of the goals of the World Summit and to the need for continued attention to such areas as health and nutrition, education,

water supply and sanitation, as well as gender disparity, malaria, HIV/AIDS and protection of the most vulnerable children. A number of speakers stressed the need for increased resources for development in Africa and for measures to relieve the burden of external debt, which hampered the achievement of the goals for children in many countries. Other speakers referred to the continued importance of the 20/20 Initiative as a means of helping countries to channel available resources. A delegation from the region said that African Governments should provide clear and positive indications of their efforts to increase investments in the social sector, move ahead with decentralization and to establish policies for cost-sharing for sustainability.

49. Some delegations said that the report should have provided more analysis on how UNICEF had responded to the needs of children in Africa and about the focus for the future. A group of countries said that there should have been more analysis of the success of the strategies of service delivery, capacity-building and empowerment, and a better presentation of trends and facts. They said that the report did not include analysis as to whether the activities described were the best use of available resources and whether UNICEF programmes in Africa were cost-effective and effective. More comparison between countries would have allowed the Executive Board to understand why some countries were making progress in the achievement of goals and others were not. The report was weak in presenting and discussing priorities and did not provide sufficient information about how UNICEF and African countries planned to reach the World Summit goals in view of the problems that had been noted.

50. A delegation expressed concerned about the breadth of the UNICEF portfolio in Africa and asked how scarce UNICEF resources could be managed to reach so many competing priorities. It was not clear from the report what UNICEF was doing to support countries that were not on track to achieve the World Summit goals. The delegation would have liked to see more information on programme direction and strategies and asked whether the structure of field offices was being reviewed to provide needed technical support in priority areas. Another delegation asked about the implications of changes in staff strength in Africa. The first speaker said that it would also be useful to analyse how country offices dealt with the competing priorities of the World Summit in the country programme planning process. The same delegation asked about the disparity in fund-raising between the two African regions, especially for education and water and sanitation.

51. Another delegation said that poverty was the main cause of the problems facing African children and that greater efforts towards its eradication would reduce the number of emergencies on the continent. In assessing progress towards the World Summit goals, UNICEF should identify and analyse trends in such indicators as maternal mortality, literacy and diseases caused by poverty. The progress report should have contained more detail on how the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNICEF mission statement could be used to improve the conditions of African children, as well as information on future plans to prevent sexual exploitation. The delegation requested more information on Operation Lifeline Sudan, the lessons learned from that experience and how that knowledge had been fed back into programme management.

52. A speaker expressed strong support for the UNICEF anti-war agenda, and, where necessary, UNICEF involvement in humanitarian assistance. Another speaker said that children needed special protection from economic and sexual exploitation and recruitment into armies.

53. A delegation said that the Bamako Initiative and the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative had helped countries to revitalize health services. Other speakers said that improvements in girls' education led directly to the improved well-being of women, and that UNICEF should take the lead in advocacy on behalf of women since their education and access to income have a direct impact of children, especially girls.

54. Several delegations said that urbanization was increasingly a problem that had an impact on the situation of children and should be reflected in future UNICEF programmes.

55. Referring to paragraph 57 of the report, which stated that UNICEF was at risk of losing its comparative advantage in the water sector, a speaker requested more information about the impact on UNICEF programmes. A group of countries found that the explanation for under-funding in the water and sanitation sector was inadequate.

56. In a brief response, the secretariat stressed that health and education were priorities for UNICEF in Africa. The continent was not a homogenous entity, and each country programme was based on a situation analyses in order to focus on specific problems. However, health and education were general priorities, and in almost every country office, there were specialized staff working in those areas. Given its limited resources and the enormity of the problems facing children in Africa, UNICEF continually worked to leverage the resources of other donors and Governments. UNICEF was aware of the disparities in supplementary funding between the two African regions and was working to compensate for the shortfalls in West and Central Africa and to increase leveraging of funds. (See chapter III, decision 1997/19, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

E. United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa

57. Presenting an oral report on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, the Director, Programme Division, said that UNICEF was fully committed to its implementation. UNICEF saw the Special Initiative as an important means to strengthen the capacities of African Governments to frame their own priorities and was concentrating on policy-related and country-level activities. The country programme approach was in line with the mechanisms of the Special Initiative, and UNICEF was working with many partners, including bilateral development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions in the elaboration of sectoral investment programmes (SIPs). SIPs had been established in a number of countries in different areas, e.g. in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi and Mozambique for both health and education, in Zambia for health and in the Comoros for education. UNICEF was also working within the framework of different regional structures with, for example, WHO and the World Bank in health and with UNESCO, the World Bank and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa in education. All UNICEF representatives in Africa had received guidelines to assist them in implementing the provisions of the Special Initiative.

58. Several speakers said that the Special Initiative was a means of promoting better coordination within the United Nations system for sustainable development which would enable countries to identify their own priorities and pursue responses to their own needs. It was suggested that UNICEF should play a more active role in coordinating the involvement of other agencies in favour of children because of its extensive country-level presence. The importance given to ownership by Governments was appreciated, but a speaker said that the

resources to be mobilized by the Special Initiative over 10 years were inadequate to deal with the continent's problems.

59. A group of countries said that although the Special Initiative had some positive effects, in some areas its impact had been limited or unknown. Africa would need a high level of development input over the next few years, and coordination was needed between the various initiatives that had been launched in Africa. The United Nations New Agenda for Development in Africa had not had any real impact, and the Special Initiative would have to demonstrate its capacity to bring added value. The speaker requested an explanation of the role of SIPs in the Special Initiative and welcomed closer collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions. Another delegation requested that instructions for closer collaboration with WFP be included in future directives to field offices on the Special Initiative. In the next progress report on Africa, UNICEF should provide more specific information about how the Special Initiative was being implemented in the field.

F. Report on the allocation of general resources

60. The Executive Board had before it the report on the allocation of general resources (E/ICEF/1997/P/L.17 and Corr.1). In introducing the document, the Director, Programme Division, explained that the modified system retained the three core criteria and refined their weighting so that countries with low gross national product (GNP) per capita and a high under-five mortality rate (U5MR) received higher priority. He also explained that 93 per cent of the general resources available for programmes was allocated directly to the country level, while 7 per cent was set aside for flexibility to evolving needs and other special circumstances. He further briefly explained the five major steps of the modified allocation system. He thanked the Board, especially the Vice-President charged with overseeing the negotiations on the draft recommendation, for the useful informal meetings and consultations that contributed greatly to the development and finalization of the proposed modified system.

61. The Vice-President explained that in response to the agreement reached at the February 1997 inter-sessional meeting of the Board, he had organized several informal meetings and consultations with the secretariat and several members of the Board to arrive at a consensus and to develop a draft recommendation. He emphasized the need to arrive at a consensus at the present session.

62. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the very high quality of the paper and thanked the Director, Programme Division, and the Vice-President for their excellent work. Most delegations welcomed the priority given to countries most in need, specifically, the least developed and low-income countries. Some donor delegations confirmed that this was in accordance with the policy of their countries to give priority to the alleviation of poverty. A few delegations commented that the resource allocation system should be poverty-oriented. It should contribute to poverty alleviation in least developed countries (LDCs) and in sub-Saharan Africa.

63. Several delegations indicated that the share of LDCs, low-income countries and countries in sub-Saharan Africa should be increased substantially. A few delegations encouraged that the goal should be to allocate at least 60 per cent of general resources to LDCs and 50 per cent to sub-Saharan Africa. Some delegations expressed concern about the negative effect of placing emphasis on regional shares and targeted shares for regions and groupings as they affect the transparency of the application of the general resources allocation system.

64. Some delegations expressed concern about regional imbalances in the modification of the allocation system. One delegation indicated that under the modified system, the allocation to Asia would decrease, while most poor children live in South Asia. One delegation said that the regional percentage did not reflect the diversity and complexity of country situations. In response, the Director, Programme Division pointed out that within each region, there would be countries receiving more general resources and countries receiving less. In South Asia, most countries would receive higher allocation shares under the modified system because their per capita GNP was relatively low and their U5MR was relatively high compared to other countries.

65. A number of delegations supported the 7 per cent of general resources set aside to respond to evolving needs and special circumstances. Some of them requested that criteria and guidelines should be worked out further for the allocation of the set-aside to ensure transparency and that its use be reported in the Executive Director's report.

66. Many delegations supported the continued use of the three criteria, per capita GNP, U5MR and child population. Two speakers suggested that other criteria should also be considered, such as child malnutrition, the maternal mortality rate, countries in transition, and the absorptive capacity of recipient Governments. Several other speakers expressed the view that child population was not a good criteria for resource allocation.

67. Several delegations supported the level of minimum allocation of $625,000, while two others said that it was too high. Still other speakers found it difficult to understand the concept and its relationship with the principle of universality. In response to a query about how the minimum allocation would be used, the Director, Programme Division, explained that the minimum allocation was fixed as an affordable level to allow a viable country programme. He also explained that minimum allocation would be a direct input for specific programmes and projects and did not cover programme support. He further emphasized that the rationale for the minimum allocation did not specifically stem from the principle of universality, but from the practical concern of a viable country programme.

68. Several delegations expressed concern about the declining level of general resources, which would greatly affect implementation of approved country programmes for children. In this connection, one speaker suggested that the decline of general resources should not affect LDCs. UNICEF was urged to raise more funds for general resources and donor countries to increase their general resources contributions to UNICEF. One delegation requested UNICEF to report to the Board on its fund-raising policy and strategy.

69. Two delegations expressed their concern with the graduation concept, stating that it would limit UNICEF work in many countries and jeopardize partnerships. One speaker said that the income threshold for graduation was too low in comparison with that of UNDP, with another speaker adding that the UNDP resource allocation profile for Africa was more satisfactory. Another speaker said that the needs of countries at an early development stage should be sufficiently considered. One speaker stressed that any measures taken in a country needed to be agreed by both the Government and UNICEF. In response, the Director, Programme Division, explained that the graduation threshold was a combination of GNP per capita at $2,895 and U5MR at 30 per 1,000 live births. This combined threshold was more demanding than the UNDP threshold of GNP per capita at $4,000. He also emphasized that U5MR was a good summary indicator of the level of development and not solely of the well-being of children.

70. One speaker said that child development should be put into the macro-social and economic context. The importance of sustainability and national capacity-building was stressed by another speaker.

71. A few delegations said that UNICEF should start to implement the new system, then evaluate its effectiveness and revise it when needed. It was suggested by another speaker that the new system should be applied only to those new programmes, not to those that were approved earlier. Another delegation commented that 2003 was too far away to assess the implementation of the new system. Moreover, an assessment of implementation should consider the outcome of the 2001 end-decade review of the World Summit goals.

72. Prior to the adoption of the decision, one Board member reiterated the view that the allocation of general resources should take into account circumstances not reflected by a country's U5MR and GNP. He understood that any likely difficulties caused by the implication of the decision to phase out general resources in a country would be brought to the attention of the Executive Director as specified in paragraph 7 of the decision and paragraph 5 (c) of the annex to the decision. His delegation further understood that the phasing out of countries satisfying the graduation level would be applied gradually in consultation with the Governments concerned. The cooperation and partnership with UNICEF had been instrumental in many countries' progress, which should not be threatened. (See chapter III, decision 1997/18, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

G. Outline of UNICEF information and publication policy

73. The Executive Director introduced the report on "UNICEF information and publications policy" (E/ICEF/1997/17), and the Director, Division of Communication (DOC), summarized its contents. He also reported on efforts to consolidate UNICEF publications and coordinate them through the new mechanism of the Publications Review Committee and on mechanisms to coordinate publications within the wider United Nations system. He informed delegations about a number of initiatives taken by DOC with regard to UNICEF on the Internet. The secretariat was seeking guidance on the form, scope and timing of the broader information and publication policy to be presented to the Executive Board at a future session.

74. Most delegations commended the paper as a good interim report on UNICEF information and publication activities, but several delegations expressed the need for a more elaborate communication policy framework at a later date. One delegation noted that the current report provided background information on UNICEF publications without mapping out any policy direction or clearly defining the role of the communication function at global, regional and country levels. Another delegation stressed that without a policy framework, there was a danger of wasting resources. One delegation recommended that the policy paper identify priority areas and provide a strategy for implementation. In response to a suggestion by the Executive Director, it was agreed to defer presentation of a more detailed paper until the 1998 annual Board session.

75. The Director responded to queries regarding the publication budget for the Progress of Nations, The State of the World's Children report and the UNICEF Annual Report. One delegation welcomed the measures being taken to reduce costs, and another asked to what extent work was being outsourced to external contractors. Several delegations suggested that UNICEF information be better defined in relation to target audiences (donors/recipients/the general public). Several speakers stressed the need to monitor and evaluate the impact of UNICEF

publications and suggested that the secretariat undertake cost-benefit studies to enable the organization to target its audiences more effectively. The Director said that UNICEF communication activities were decentralized to enable field offices and National Committees to target their own audiences more effectively and evaluate the impact of the materials. With regard to evaluation, he noted that UNICEF was trying to enhance evaluation capacity at the country level by organizing training workshops on audience research.

76. One delegation enquired about the benefits of the recent restructuring of the division and whether it was now a more efficient operation. The Director said that the consolidation of the communication function had resulted in greater consistency in the projection of the UNICEF image; eliminated the duplication of activities, thus saving both posts and funds; and greatly enhanced internal cohesion.

77. Several delegations welcomed the organization's Internet initiatives. One delegation mentioned the need for more specific audience targeting in this connection and encouraged the secretariat to continue to produce Internet materials in French and Spanish. One delegation stressed the importance of the Internet as a means of communication between UNICEF and National Committees, and the need for collaboration to produce Web sites for the general public. In response, the Director said that the medium was still evolving and that currently the Internet audience was limited, but would clearly grow.

H. Greeting Card and related Operations

78. The Executive Board had before it the GCO work plan and proposed budget for the eight-month period 1 May to 31 December 1997 (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8) and the GCO financial report and statements for the year ended 30 April 1996 (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.9).

79. The Director, GCO, made a presentation on GCO performance in the past year and its key strategies for 1997 as well as on initiatives affecting 1997 and beyond. The presentation outlined the new steps that have been taken by GCO following the recommendations of the Coopers and Lybrand study, including the introduction of the "New Look" greeting card line and brochure.

80. GCO initiatives in 1997 included the expansion of the "New Look" card line and brochures to additional markets, condensing and harmonizing the product line, and shortening the product development and adoption process. The focus would be on key markets and implementation of the recommendations of the UNICEF field office task force. The roles of GCO and National Committees would be delineated and emphasis placed on the new partnership model with National Committees. During 1998, initiatives will include the consolidation of GCO headquarters in one location in Europe and integrated brand management of both cards and private sector fund-raising.

81. The Director was commended for his clear and transparent presentation and more concise and informative documentation with a market-oriented analysis. GCO was praised for implementing more efficient business processes and new initiatives to maximize income for UNICEF from the private sector.

82. Several speakers congratulated GCO on the income it produced for UNICEF in 1996 as well as the efforts of Member States which made the results possible. One speaker stressed the potential for further development of partnerships with the private sector to increase funds. Another delegation highlighted the fact that 10 out of 13 priority field offices had received government authorization

to carry out private sector fund-raising in their countries and hoped that the other three countries would receive permission soon.

83. The importance of increased allocations of funds for general resources was stressed. It was noted that only a marginally higher percentage of private sector fund-raising income was allocated to general resources in 1996 than in 1995.

84. Regarding the focus on key markets, several speakers hoped this initiative would provide good potential for increasing revenues for UNICEF and were of the opinion that this was the correct direction for the future. However, one delegation expressed concern that markets that were currently performing well could suffer if they did not meet the criteria to be included in the key markets. This could lead not only to lower income generation, but also to weakened advocacy for UNICEF. The Director clarified that support for profitable markets would not be relinquished at the expense of increased emphasis on key markets.

85. Another speaker expressed concern that countries with large populations, but low per capita income where UNICEF card sales volume was low, would not meet key market criteria and proposed that GCO consider strategies such as selling designs reflecting local culture and at lower prices. Increased card sales would also improve advocacy in the region. The Director replied that if the new business strategies currently being implemented, which included the option of regional designs, did not produce sufficient results over the next two to three years, more regional strategies could be considered.

86. On the issue of retention rates, one delegation noted that rules on retention rates should be enforced more stringently. The Director pointed out that responsibility for adherence to those rules also rested with sales partners. Proposed stronger cooperation, accountability and improved planning with sales partners would lead to greater transparency in this area. Several delegations welcomed the closer cooperation with GCO and an improved and more closely monitored joint work planning process.

87. In response to a query, the Director reported that the GCO name would also be changed to more accurately reflect its activities at the time of the move of GCO headquarters and when the new GCO structure was announced.

88. The Executive Director expressed the hope that the activities of GCO, an important UNICEF division which related directly to recent Board discussions on financial resources and organization, would receive the fullest attention by Executive Board members in view of the significance of income from the private sector, particularly for general resources. (See chapter III, decisions 1997/14 and 1997/15, for the text of the decisions adopted by the Executive Board.)

I. Reports on the meetings of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education and the UNICEF/World Health Organization Joint Committee on Health Policy

UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education

89. The President of the Executive Board presented the report on the sixth meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF JCE held in Bucharest, Romania, on 5 and 6 May (E/ICEF/1997/18). The discussions covered new areas of cooperation and the important issue of coordination and support at the local level. Also emphasized

was the importance of ensuring quality education and training for girls and women. Cooperation between the two organizations in emergency situations was also discussed. (See E/ICEF/1997/CRP.17 for her report on the meeting.)

90. The UNESCO representative in New York said that the collaboration of UNESCO and UNICEF had produced tangible movement towards the goal of universal primary education. UNICEF and UNESCO had been instrumental in creating the Education for All (EFA) momentum, embracing the active participation of the World Bank, UNDP and UNFPA.

91. He urged that the collaboration and co-funding of joint activities in the area of basic education be maintained. UNESCO, for its part, would maintain its contribution of $400,000 annually towards the collaborative programme, and he hoped that UNICEF would also continue its contribution at least for the ongoing phase of 1997.

92. Meanwhile, he said that consultations between the two secretariats at the level of the executive heads were currently in progress to identify modalities for the renewal of the cooperative agreement, and that the outcome of these consultations would be presented to the UNESCO Executive Board by its Director-General.

93. One delegation said that collaboration had at times been too theoretical and that there was a need to move towards more practical outcomes. The meeting in Bucharest had provided the opportunity to review the achievements of the past as well as to review future forms of collaboration. Some areas of collaboration, such as the Mid-Decade Review of EFA at Amman, the programme on educational statistics and collaboration with the International Institute of Educational Planning, had been very successful. However, there were other areas which now needed to be reviewed critically. There was need to see the partnership between the two organizations not merely as a financial partnership, but as one that involved mutual reflection and commitment to the achievement of common goals.

94. In response, the Executive Director said that it had been agreed that the learning achievement programme should be continued, but with some improvements and with greater decentralization, whereas the innovations programme would be discontinued in its present form. (See chapter III, decision 1997/16, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy

95. The President of the Executive Board introduced the report on the thirty-first session of the UNICEF/WHO JCHP held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva on 19 and 20 May (E/ICEF/1997/19). She said that the meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on 49 years of collaboration between UNICEF and WHO. Recent WHO recommendations, as well as health-related programmes of both organizations, were reviewed. Areas requiring a priority focus included new emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases (malaria control, HIV/AIDS, especially the issue of breast-feeding and HIV/AIDS), prevention and control of iodine deficiency, infant and young child nutrition, emergency and humanitarian action, prevention of violence and renewal of the health for all strategy. It was stressed that UNICEF and WHO should continue to collaborate in increasing community involvement, providing greater access of health services to the poorest and ensuring sustainability of health actions. She informed delegations that the World Health Assembly had considered the terms of reference of the new WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health. UNDP had deferred discussion

of the issue to its third regular session of 1997, and she suggested that UNICEF do the same. (See E/ICEF/1997/CRP.18 for her report on the meeting.)

96. At the request of one delegation, it was agreed that the report would be brought before the Board again at its September session in connection with consideration of the mandate and terms of reference of the new Coordinating Committee. (See chapter III, decision 1997/17, for the text of the decision adopted by the Executive Board.)

97. The Executive Director commented that there had been very substantive interactions at both meetings and that programmes were reviewed to decide what should be continued. It was also agreed that each Committee would meet every two years as originally decided.

J. Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF

98. In introducing the progress report on "Implementation of management excellence in UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1997/CRP.15), the Executive Director shared examples of improvements taking place in the process as a result of clarified roles for country, regional and headquarters offices. Although exact figures on expected human resource and budgetary implications of MEP were not available, she assured the Board that changes in the roles of country, regional and headquarters offices would not involve the creation of new structures nor substantive increases in posts within regional offices. She stated that any major staffing changes foreseen would more likely be a consequence of reductions in financial resources and increases in local staff costs rather than a redefinition of roles.

99. The Executive Director stressed that uncertainty due to ongoing change, budget reductions and the possible implications of the restructuring of the United Nations had stirred many valid staff concerns. She expressed her commitment to communicate developments as soon as they evolved to both UNICEF staff and the Executive Board. She confirmed that UNICEF offices were adopting new roles, work processes, management practices and operating systems, and as experience is gained with the new roles, practices and systems, she would be requesting that reports to the Executive Board include, beginning in 1998, highlighted examples of increased effectiveness as a result of management excellence. She assured the Board that she would continue to monitor and report on how standards of excellence were achieved in the way UNICEF serves children, ensuring that children remain the first to benefit from this initiative through effective country programmes.

100. The Executive Director spoke of activities undertaken since the preparation of the report to develop more effective processes for budget planning and review. They included programme and budget reviews coordinated in the regions allowing for discussions to take into greater account the country and regional contexts; headquarters budgets based on management plans and open budget forums held to encourage wider staff participation in the budget preparation and review process and to contribute towards a greater coordination of the roles of headquarters divisions in supporting field offices; and defining core organizational functions and accountabilities based on management plans to ensure that the functions of various locations work together as a whole to maximize the best use of resources for children. The Executive Director stated that the secretariat would soon be reviewing biennium budget proposals to ensure the most effective use of resources in support of UNICEF programmes and informed of her plans to share preliminary information of the budget with the Board at its third regular session in September.

101. The newly elected President of the Global Staff Association (GSA) addressed the Board, reporting on the status of staff morale within the secretariat. One speaker said that management excellence should not be carried out to the detriment of a committed staff body. Another delegation highlighted the need for the Board to avoid micro-management. Other speakers thanked the GSA President for her statement, stressing the unavoidability of problems during a change process and the need for continued strengthening of human resources management and information-sharing with staff.

102. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the transparency, openness and rigour of the management excellence process to date. Many speakers thanked the secretariat for the clear and informative documentation on the UNICEF system of accountability for the country programme process. One delegation requested that the system of accountability for the secretariat be made complete through clarification of accountabilities of the Executive Board. The Executive Director replied that efforts to clarify Board/secretariat responsibilities were under way and that she looked forward to continued discussions with the Board on this topic.

103. Two delegations said that the description of experiences of regional bodies of other United Nations agencies did not provide sufficient detail. Another speaker regretted that it did not reflect the World Bank experience with regionalization. Several speakers expressed positive assessments of the roles and relationships between country, regional and headquarters offices, encouraging continued movement forward. One delegation welcomed the role of regional offices as defined as it allowed bilateral donor Governments to dialogue with one body rather than with multiple countries. Another speaker stated that the regional approach was more suited to UNICEF than the headquarters approach. One delegation urged the Programme Group at headquarters to undertake initiatives to enhance national capacities.

104. One speaker questioned the value added by the regional office raising concerns about possible redundancies, and welcomed an oral briefing on this topic at the next session of the Board. Another speaker, representing three other delegations, spoke of potential benefits and risks - benefits being found in the country programme planning process and policy development at headquarters and risks relating to the actual functioning of a regional office. This speaker requested that the budget document for the January 1998 session provide a clear picture or outline of typical responsibilities, budget and staffing of regional offices. In addition, the same speaker requested that the progress report for the September 1997 session include a chart focusing only on the new division of labour between headquarters, regional and country offices, addressing, if possible, budget and human resources implications as well as efficiency and effectiveness gains. Two other speakers also requested that preliminary budget information be shared at the September session.

105. The Executive Director assured the Board that UNICEF was very sensitive to the issue of duplication, stating that UNICEF did not have the resources to afford redundancies. She restated the unique roles of country, regional and headquarters offices and their distinct value to the strengthening of the country programme process. Her remarks were followed by two speakers, one who spoke of progress shown in the management of the UNICEF offices and subsequent results for the country programme, and the other who reported on improvements seen at the country level in the areas of country office operations, evaluation and follow up.

106. The Executive Director added that budget and human resources implications to date had been reflected in the integrated budget for regional and headquarters offices approved at the January 1997 Board session. She informed the Board that there was not one model of the typical regional office; however, she stated that the 1998-1999 budget to be submitted to the Board in January 1998 would outline specific budgetary and human resources requirements for each regional office.

107. One delegation raised concerns about the need for training to be responsive to the needs of the different regions. The Executive Director responded that although training was not seen as the answer to all problems, it was important and needed to be responsive to differences in training needs from one place to another. She explained the steps taken by the secretariat to be strategic about training, including resources for training at country and regional levels and the identification of corporate training priorities for 1997.

108. A number of speakers emphasized the link between successful management reform in UNICEF and its contribution to overall United Nations reform. In this light, many speakers welcomed the Executive Director's statement at the opening session. Statements were made by several delegations which reflected the Executive Board's commitment to act as the guardian for future action to ensure that UNICEF remained effective for children. Delegations identified the strong need for UNICEF to retain an independent voice for children, preserving its public recognition and integrity as a precious asset for the wider United Nations system. A few speakers referred specifically to the paramount importance of UNICEF access to senior government officials and the accountability of UNICEF country representatives for all stages of the country programme process.

109. Several delegations said that UNICEF had achieved good results to date. One speaker suggested that a quantitative analysis similar to the matrix prepared by UNFPA be prepared to analyse the outcome of MEP. Another speaker questioned whether management excellence had focused on organizational and procedural matters at the expense of policy and quality aspects. In response, the Executive Director said that change processes consumed a lot of time in initial stages of implementation and reconfirmed the purpose of management excellence as being to allow UNICEF to move into the twenty-first century as a highly effective organization to advocate for the protection of children's rights, help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. She emphasized the secretariat's commitment to programming, with continued attention to enhancing quality, as reflected in a number of the reports discussed at the present session.

K. Field visit of Executive Board members

110. The report on the field visit of Board members to Malawi and Zambia from 31 March to 13 April 1997 (E/ICEF/1997/CRP.16) was introduced by the team leader and Vice-President of the Board. It was a very full and fruitful visit, during which team members met with representatives of the two Governments, other United Nations agencies and various NGOs, as well as with community leaders and UNICEF staff. The team viewed UNICEF-supported projects covering a variety of activities in many programme areas. They welcomed the opportunity to see first-hand the real problems facing women and children in the two countries and expressed appreciation to the Malawi and Zambia country offices for organizing the programme of the visit.

111. In commenting on the experience of the team member from his country, another speaker said that his team member appreciated being able to observe the positive impact of UNICEF programmes on local reality. He had emphasized that more efforts should be made regarding coordination with other United Nations agencies. He had also urged UNICEF to increase cooperation with all international NGOs working in the two countries and not to focus on only the small number of the largest NGOs. UNICEF should encourage the Governments to improve their institutional capacity to monitor and evaluate implementation of the country programmes. He had prepared an evaluation paper which contained more detailed comments on the visit which could be circulated to Board members.

112. Another member of the team thanked the relevant UNICEF offices for their efforts and cooperation, adding that he had learned a great deal about operational activities. He suggested that members of the Government should be invited to visit programme sites as well.

113. One delegation stressed the importance of these visits which provided Board members with an opportunity to see what UNICEF was actually doing in the field. It would also help to sensitize them to the way in which issues that fell within the mandate of the Board should be addressed. He asked if team members had seen any effects or results of change management in the field, specifically in areas such as the country management process, staff morale and accountability as this had not been reflected in the report.

114. The team leader replied that there had been no particular focus on change management, but based on what the team had been able to observe, the current structure of UNICEF generally reflected the reality of the situation and UNICEF offices were working effectively in these countries. The purpose of the visit, he said, was to learn how UNICEF programmes were implemented.

L. Presentation of the 1997 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award

115. The President and the Executive Director made brief statements congratulating the Legal Assistance Centre of Namibia on its selection as winner of the 1997 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award. Mr. Andrew Corbett, Director, accepted the Award on behalf of the Centre.

M. Other matters

116. The representative of Albania expressed his country's deep appreciation for the work done by UNICEF in that country during its recent problems. He thanked UNICEF, and especially the UNICEF representative, for its continued and uninterrupted support. The "courage and devotion" shown by the UNICEF staff in Tirana represented the work of the entire United Nations system in Albania.

N. Closing remarks by the Executive Director and the President of the Executive Board

117. In her closing remarks, the President acknowledged the hard work and good will of all participants in reaching consensus on some difficult issues. The Board's informal meeting on United Nations reform had shown the importance of participation and of not being indifferent. While UNICEF was prepared to accept changes, it was important that it continue to speak for children. The support of the National Committees for UNICEF in that effort was crucial, as they represented the voice of those outside the United Nations system.

118. During the session, most of the discussions had focused on ways of improving UNICEF programmes, particularly concerning the strategy for children in need of special protection measures and as reported in the Executive Director's report. The session had been very productive, but the third regular session in September would require even more action, creativity and sincerity in the context of United Nations reform.

119. The Executive Director thanked the members of the Bureau, Board members and observer delegations, and representatives of National Committees for their guidance and hard work. She was confident that the discussions had conveyed a sense of richness of UNICEF programme activities as well as reasons to be encouraged about progress in realizing the goals of the World Summit for Children. One of the paramount challenges facing the organization, she stressed, was to ensure that the same spectrum of human rights accorded to adults were specifically upheld for children and women.

120. The Executive Director said that the discussions during the session had underlined a fundamental point of the rights-based approach - that the primary responsibility for implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child rested with Governments, and that it was the role of UNICEF to support those efforts. It was clear that the reliance on a rights-based framework would not entail any fundamental changes in the country programme process. But UNICEF recognized that because the Convention covered children's physical as well as psycho-social needs, UNICEF must continue to broaden its analysis to address issues of disparity and discrimination. And because the Convention is a legal document, UNICEF must of necessity become more deeply involved in efforts to protect children as a matter of law as well as policy.

121. In closing, she expressed appreciation for the opportunity provided to exchange views and concerns about the United Nations-wide reform process. The discussions had set a high standard for constructiveness and responsibility.

1996 UNICEF Staff Awards for Outstanding Service

122. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 1996 Staff Awards, which are presented each year in recognition of exemplary accomplishments as members of groups, teams, offices or sections. The winners were the Operations Centre of the Office of Emergency Programmes, New York, for its effective support to the field during humanitarian crises; the Operations Team of the UNICEF office in Lagos, Nigeria, for its dramatic improvements to programme effectiveness; the UNICEF office in Jakarta, Indonesia, for its outstanding programme delivery; and the UNICEF office in Conakry, Guinea, for its innovative management improvements.

1997/14. Greeting Card and related Operations work plan and proposed budget for the eight-month period 1 May to 31 December 1997

A. Greeting Card and related Operations (GCO) budgeted expenditures for the 1997 season

The Executive Board

1. Approves for the fiscal period 1 May to 31 December 1997 budgeted expenditures of $85.3 million as detailed below and summarized in column II of annex I to document E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8:

	(In millions of United States dollars)
Director's Office	0.3
Product Line and Marketing	55.2
Private Sector Fund-raising	7.9
Operations and Finance	9.8
Subtotal	73.2
Non-operating expenses:	
Market Development Programme (MDP)	3.0
Fund-raising Development Programme (FDP)	7.8
GCO share in UNICEF administrative costs	0.6
Central and Eastern European National Committees Development Programme	0.7
Subtotal	12.1
Total expenditures, consolidated a/	85.3

2. Authorizes the Executive Director:

(a) To incur expenditures as summarized in column II of annex I to document E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8 and to increase the expenditures up to the level indicated in column III of annex I to the same document, should the apparent net proceeds from product sales and/or private sector fund-raising increase to the levels indicated in column III of annex I, and, accordingly, to reduce expenditures below the level indicated in column II to the extent necessary, should the net proceeds decrease;

(b) To transfer funds when necessary between the various budgets as detailed above;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, owing to currency fluctuations, to ensure the continued operation of GCO.

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a/ For details see E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8, table 2.

B. Budgeted income for the 1997 season

The Executive Board

Notes that for the fiscal period 1 May to 31 December 1997, GCO net proceeds are budgeted at $259.9 million as shown in column II of annex I to document E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. Approves the changes in posts with a net decrease of nine posts as indicated in annexes IV and VI of document E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8;

2. Renews MDP with $3.0 million established for 1997;

3. Renews FDP with $7.8 established for 1997;

4. Renews the Central and Eastern European National Committees Development Programme, which includes 10 countries, with a budget of $0.7 million established for 1997;

5. Authorizes the Executive Director to incur expenditures in the 1997 fiscal period related to cost of goods delivered (production/purchase of raw materials, cards and other products) for the 1998 fiscal year up to $42.3 million as indicated in the GCO medium-term plan (see table 8 of document E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.8).

Annual session
5 June 1997

1997/15. Greeting Card and related Operations financial report and statements for the year ended 30 April 1996

The Executive Board

Takes note of the Greeting Card and related Operations financial report and statements for the year ended 30 April 1996 (E/ICEF/1997/AB/L.9).

Annual session
5 June 1997

1997/16. Report on the meeting of the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education

The Executive Board

Takes note of the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education on its sixth meeting held in Bucharest, Romania, on 5 and 6 May 1997 (E/ICEF/1997/18) and the recommendations contained therein.

Annual session
5 June 1997

1997/17. Report on the meeting of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy

The Executive Board

Takes note of the report of the UNICEF/World Health Organization (WHO) Joint Committee on Health Policy on its thirty-first session held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva on 19 and 20 May 1997 (E/ICEF/1997/19) and the recommendations contained therein.

Annual session
5 June 1997

1997/18. Modified system for allocation of general resources for programmes

The Executive Board

1. Commends the secretariat for its implementation of decision 1996/34 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1) on the allocation of general resources and the work undertaken in close consultation with the Executive Board in revising the current general resources allocation system;

2. Stresses its determination to give higher priority to the needs of children in low-income countries, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs) and those of sub-Saharan Africa, in line with General Assembly resolution 51/186 of 16 December 1996 on Progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children, and with relevant decisions of the Executive Board and the UNICEF Mission Statement, and recalls particularly, in this context, paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 of resolution 51/186 on the need for a substantial increase in resources, while re-emphasizing the importance and urgent need to increase the general resources for UNICEF;

3. Reaffirms the principles of eligibility of all recipient countries on the basis of the fundamental characteristics of the operational activities of the United Nations development system, in line with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly;

4. Takes note of the modified system for the allocation of general resources available for programmes, as described in document E/ICEF/1997/P/L.17;

5. Endorses the modified system for allocation of general resources as outlined in the annex to the present decision and requests the Executive Director to implement it accordingly;

6. Stresses the need to monitor thoroughly the impact of the modified system on situations of children in countries near or above graduation levels;

7. Requests the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board on the implementation of the present decision, particularly on the use of the 7 per cent set aside for flexibility, on a regular basis in her annual report, as well as at any critical junction during the implementation;

8. Decides to review in 2003 and taking into account the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 decided in paragraph 27 of above-mentioned resolution 51/186, the modified system for allocation of general resources in order to improve its different components for its continuation,

inter alia with the aim of increasing substantially the allocation of general resources to the LDCs and to sub-Saharan Africa, and requests the Executive Director to provide the Executive Board with a comprehensive report to this end.

Annex

ALLOCATION OF GENERAL RESOURCES WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODIFIED SYSTEM, BEGINNING IN 1999

I. GENERAL RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMMES

1. The general resources for programmes are defined as the direct input to achieve the objectives of a specific programme or project for development cooperation available within the "regular resources" (cf. harmonization of budgets) of UNICEF. The modified system for the allocation of general resources applies only to this portion of the "regular resources", thus not to those for the support budget or to supplementary funds ("other resources"). For example, in 1996, the general resources available for programmes amounted to $317 million as compared to support budget resources of $246 million or supplementary funds of $545 million.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE MODIFIED SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATION OF GENERAL RESOURCES

2. The modified system continues to be based on the three existing core criteria - under-five mortality rate (U5MR), gross national product (GNP) per capita and child population - and aims at:

(a) Giving progressively higher priority to the children of low-income countries, in particular the LDCs and those of sub-Saharan Africa;

(b) Ensuring the continued use of the moral authority of UNICEF to advocate for children's rights and needs as well as ensuring high-quality policy and advice;

(c) Allocating general resources sufficient to strengthen the effective implementation of programmes in the respective countries;

(d) Accommodating evolving needs and special circumstances of children through an appropriate degree of flexibility.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALLOCATION OF GENERAL RESOURCES

A. Main features of the allocation

3. The main features of the allocations are as follows:

(a) At least two thirds of general resources for programmes will be allocated on the basis of the three core criteria (U5MR; GNP per capita; child population);

(b) Each country with a UNICEF country programme shall receive an allocation on the basis of the three core criteria, using the existing formula and refined weighting system given in annex I of document E/ICEF/1997/P/L.17;

(c) Each country with a UNICEF country programme shall receive a minimum allocation of $600,000 for core programming. This amount will be maintained

when general resources levels increase or remain constant. If general resources levels decrease, the minimum allocation shall be reduced by the same proportion;

(d) The minimum allocation will be used exclusively for programme assistance, the support budget costs being covered by other resources beyond the minimum allocation;

(e) No LDC is to receive an allocation below its calculated level under the current system;

(f) Abrupt changes in country allocations shall be avoided by limiting them to a maximum of 10 per cent compared with the previous year's level;

(g) Countries having reached a combined threshold of GNP per capita above $2,895 and a U5MR of less than 30 per 1,000 live births shall gradually be phased out of the allocation of general resources for programme assistance, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5 (b) below;

(h) Countries covered by the three multi-country programmes shall continue to receive a combined lump sum sufficient for viable and effective programme intervention;

(I) Special programmes shall continue to be funded from general resources as approved by the Executive Board;

(j) Seven per cent of the general resources for programmes will be set aside to respond flexibly to the great diversity in country situations as well as to evolving needs and special circumstances;

(k) The bulk of the net income from the sale of greeting cards and other products in developing countries shall continue to be allocated to the country of origin to finance Executive Board-approved unfunded supplementary-funded programmes;

(l) The estimated non-reimbursed year-end balance of the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) will be allocated to individual countries on a case-by-case basis, charged against general resources set aside for this purpose.

B. Utilization of the 7 per cent set aside for flexibility

4. Allocations out of this portion of the general resources for programmes are to be decided upon by the Executive Director, aiming at:

(a) Encouraging excellence in performance;

(b) Responding to emerging opportunities to benefit children;

(c) Cushioning the impact of shortfalls in the estimated general resources available for programmes on country allocations;

(d) Reducing imbalances between general resources and supplementary funds for Executive Board-approved country programmes. In cases of competition between similar situations in different countries for the set-aside resources available, priority shall be given to the needs of low-income countries, particularly LDCs;

(e) Avoiding sudden changes in the level of general resource allocations to individual countries resulting from the implementation of the modified system.

C. Modalities for implementation of the modified system

5. The modalities for implementation are as follows:

(a) The gradual implementation of the modified system shall begin in 1999;

(b) The Executive Director shall monitor closely and evaluate the implementation and the impact of the modified system on the lives of children in all programme countries, particularly the situation of children in countries reaching the combined threshold of GNP per capita of $2,895 and of U5MR of 30 per 1,000 live births. The Executive Director shall enter an open dialogue with countries near or above graduation level with the aim of examining possibilities for compensating general resources from UNICEF with resources from government (e.g., cost-sharing of continued UNICEF activities) or other sources (e.g., supplementary funding);

(c) The Executive Director shall report to the Executive Board on the implementation of the modified system, particularly on the use of the 7 per cent set aside for flexibility, on a regular basis in her annual report, as well as at any critical junction when she deems it appropriate to draw the Executive Board's early attention to difficulties encountered or envisaged during the implementation. In any case, each annual report shall contain a specific annex (e.g., charts comparing percentages of shares really disbursed per regions and country categories with share targets set) assessing the evolution of and the experience with the modified system during the past period of implementation;

(d) The modified system for the allocation of general resources shall be reviewed by the Executive Board in 2003 in order either to assess its accuracy or adjust it to unexpected needs emerging during the first years of its implementation, and in any case to improve it in view of its continuation. To this purpose, the Executive Director will provide a comprehensive report on the progress made and the experience with the implementation of the modified system and on proposals for improvements, inter alia, ways and means to allocate 60 per cent of general resources to the LDCs and 50 per cent to sub-Saharan Africa.

Annual session
6 June 1997

1997/19. Ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa

The Executive Board

1. Recalls its decision 1995/18 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), mindful of the UNICEF commitment to Africa as the region of greatest need and highest priority;

2. Acknowledges that the condition of children in a number of African countries remains critical due to socio-economic factors, man-made and natural disasters, violence and exploitation, as well as demographic growth and the scourge of HIV/AIDS;

3. Takes note of the progress report submitted by the Executive Director on ensuring children's rights to survival, protection and development in Africa (E/ICEF/1997/15), as well as the Executive Director's report on follow-up to the World Summit for Children (E/ICEF/1997/14), which indicate that

although several African countries have made significant progress towards the World Summit goals, overall achievement is much slower than in other regions, especially in the areas of maternal and child mortality, malnutrition, basic education and sanitation;

4. Recognizes that in the current African context, the achievement of World Summit goals still constitutes a major challenge for most countries and urges the Executive Director to advocate for additional resources from both private and public sources for programmes in Africa to support efforts to accelerate the achievement of these goals as essential steps towards the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

5. Calls upon the Executive Director to continue to work with African Governments, multilateral and bilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations to increase capacity in integrated health services using the Bamako Initiative approach; to expand efforts for the control and elimination of malaria; to improve the accessibility and quality of primary education, particularly for girls; to strengthen nutrition; and to accelerate progress in water supply and sanitation;

6. Urges the Executive Director:

(a) To expand UNICEF support for African children in need of special protection, including those in situations of armed conflict;

(b) To work in all sectors and with all its partners, particularly the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to build African capacity to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS.

7. Recognizes the importance of the role of UNICEF in the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, which will enhance the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, and calls upon the Executive Director to ensure that UNICEF continues to play an active role in the inter-agency work to implement the Initiative;

8. Calls upon UNICEF to continue working with Governments and donors to promote the reallocation of national resources in favour of social sectors along the lines of the 20/20 Initiative;

9. Urges the Executive Director to continue to advocate for measures that reduce the official debt burden of African countries, including debt cancellation and debt conversion for social investment;

10. Requests the Executive Director to report on progress made in the implementation of the current decision on ensuring children's rights to survival, development and protection in Africa at the annual session of the Executive Board in 1999.

Annual session
6 June 1997

1997/20. Follow-up to the World Summit for Children

The Executive Board

1. Notes with appreciation the progress made towards the mid-decade goals established by the World Summit for Children;

2. Recognizes that the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework to ensure that all children's social, economic, cultural, political and civil rights, are guaranteed, and that achieving the Summit goals will be a major step towards ensuring all the basic rights of children;

3. Recognizes the enormous challenges ahead to meet the end-decade goals, especially in the areas of health, with a focus on under-five and maternal mortality, malnutrition, basic education and water and sanitation, and requests UNICEF to give due consideration to children requiring special protection measures, such as those affected by child labour, sexual exploitation and disabilities;

4. Urges all Governments, the international community, the private sector, NGOs and other actors in civil society, the media and communities to reaffirm their commitment to children, and to allocate to the maximum extent additional human and financial resources to support the achievement of the Summit goals for the year 2000;

5. Requests the Executive Director to work with Governments to strengthen further national capacities for the collection and use of data, including data disaggregated by gender and age, to identify appropriate indicators that are relevant, comparable and timely to monitor progress towards the realization of children's rights and the World Summit goals, developing core indicators that will enable comparison between countries and additional indicators to reflect the country's reality;

6. Further urges all Governments to adopt appropriate strategies to ensure that the rights of all children are guaranteed, in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, by strengthening where necessary their national and subnational programmes of action, and in this connection, invites UNICEF to continue its cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in facilitating a national implementation and monitoring process of the Convention, as well as its reporting system;

7. Requests the Executive Director to support the Secretary-General in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/186 of 16 December 1996;

8. Also requests the Executive Director to take necessary action, as part of the country programme process, and in close cooperation with other agencies and bilateral donors, to advocate for and support efforts by national Governments and other relevant actors in civil society to achieve the Summit goals within the framework of national and subnational programmes of action;

9. Further requests the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board at its 1998 annual session on the steps taken to implement the strategy for improved nutrition of children and women in developing countries, taking into account the updated summary of progress at mid-decade, the major challenges that remain in this area for the fulfilment of the goals for the year 2000 and the need to develop a more integrated and cross-sectoral approach;

10. Further requests the Executive Director to report to the Executive Board on the implementation of the present decision at the 1998 annual session.

Annual session
6 June 1997

1997/21. Implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures

The Executive Board,

Having reviewed the report on "Implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies on children in need of special protection measures" (E/ICEF/1997/16),

1. Endorses the overall approach for implementing the policy on children in need of special protection measures as contained in the report, taking into account the comments made by delegations at the present session, in particular with regard to the need of priority-setting, the definition and adaptation of implementation mechanisms, its financial implications as well as criteria and mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation;

2. Requests the Executive Director to submit an oral report and an accompanying conference room paper outlining progress on the above-mentioned items, including a time-frame for future action, to the Board at its 1998 annual session.

Annual session
6 June 1997